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ABSTRACT

The topics of this speech concern educational equity, excellence, dropout, and reform issues for the purpose of securing adequate public school funding. The address pleads for broader public support to increase school funding; political support for the legislative changes necessary to ensure equity and excellence; and public participation in the decision making processes at the school level to increase community involvement and concern. Particular reforms are described to show positive changes that have already occurred in Minnesota. These reforms, already funded, include successful open enrollment, advanced placement, and public school partnerships with postsecondary institutions. Other reforms are before the state legislature. Known as the governor's "children's agenda," programs include expanding the state's early childhood family education program, expanding preschool health screening, increasing child care services inside and outside the schools, and investing $80 million for the purchase of student computers and other education technology. (JAM)

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PROPOSED GOVERNOR'S REMARKS FOR NATIONAL SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION COUNCIL OF URBAN BOARDS OF EDUCATION LUNCHEON MARCH 31, 1989

I AM VERY PLEASED TO BE HERE TODAY...TO DISCUSS HOW TO PROVIDE EQUAL ACCESS TO EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE FOR ALL OF OUR CHILDREN.

AS A FORMER SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER...I KNOW HOW IMPORTANT YOU ARE TO OUR EDUCATIONAL FUTURE.

IT IS EASY TO TALK ABOUT SETTING THE HIGHEST STANDARDS FOR EDUCATION.

BUT YOU ARE THE ONES WHO MUST RECONCILE THOSE STANDARDS WITH THE REALITIES INSIDE THE CLASSROOM...THE SOCIETY OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM...AND THE LIMITED FINANCIAL RESOURCES AVAILABLE.

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Rudy Perpich

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

THE CHALLENGE IS CLEAR.

RIGHT NOW...NEARLY A THIRD OF THE 40-MILLION SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN IN THIS COUNTRY ARE AT-RISK OF DROPPING OUT OR FALLING VICTIM TO DRUGS...CRIME AND UNEMPLOYMENT.

OF COURSE THOSE AT-RISK FACTORS ARE INTENSIFIED IN THE LARGER AND MORE UBRAN SCHOOL DISTRICTS THAT MANY OF YOU REPRESENT.

FURTHERMORE...RESPECTED NATIONWIDE STUDIES SUCH AS "AN IMPERILED GENERATION"... AND "A THIRD OF A NATION"... WARN US THAT THE STUDENTS WHO ARE BENEFITTING THE MOST FROM EDUCATION REFORM ARE MOST OFTEN THE STUDENTS WHO NEED IT LEAST---THE ALREADY SUCCESSFUL STUDENTS.

WE CANNOT ALLOW OUR EDUCATION SYSTEM TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE CREATION OF A PERMANENT UNDERCLASS IN AMERICAN SOCIETY.

OUR GOAL MUST BE NO LESS THAN EQUAL ACCESS TO EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE FOR ALL OF OUR STUDENTS.

THAT IS WHY WHEN WE PUT TOGETHER A COMPREHENSIVE PACKAGE OF LEGISLATIVE REFORMS FOR MINNESOTA EDUCATION IN 1985...WE NAMED IT ACCESS TO EXCELLENCE.

THIS ACCESS TO EXCELLENCE PACKAGE INCLUDED CONVENTIONAL EDUCATION REFORMS SUCH AS INCREASED FUNDING FOR STAFF AND PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT...AND A CALL FOR STATEWIDE TESTING AND SPECIFIC LEARNER OUTCOMES.

TWO YEARS BEFORE...WE HAD PASSED ONE OF THE FIRST SITE-BASED MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS IN THE NATION.

BUT WHAT WE WERE MISSING WAS A BETTER WAY TO MOTIVATE STUDENTS AND INVOLVE THEIR PARENTS IN THE EDUCATION PROCESS.

THEY ARE THE GRASSROOTS PARTICIPANTS IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM...WHO ARE AT ONCE THE CONSUMERS AND THE PRODUCTS OF THAT SYSTEM.

WHEN WE RE-INTEREST STUDENTS AND PARENTS ...WE REVITALIZE OUR SCHOOLS.

BUT IF WE REALLY WANT TO INVOLVE PARENTS AND MOTIVATE STUDENTS...WE HAVE TO BRING THEM INTO THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS...BY PROVIDING EXPANDED CHOICES AND ENROLLMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN OUR SCHOOLS.

WHEN WE PROPOSED THIS IN OUR ACCESS TO EXCELLENCE PACKAGE FOUR YEARS AGO...THERE WAS A FEAR BOTH INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE EDUCATION COMMUNITY THAT CHOICE WOULD PRODUCE BUREAUCRATIC CHAOS AND INEQUITIES.

THE LEGISLATOR WHO SPONSORED THE BILL TOLD ME THAT GETTING IT PASSED WOULD BE LIKE TRYING TO MOVE A CEMETARY---THERE WAS NO INTERNAL SUPPORT.

WHAT WE DID WAS ENACT THE REFORMS PIECE-BY-PIECE...SO THAT THE PUBLIC COULD GAIN CONFIDENCE IN THE ABILITY OF CHOICE TO BROADEN BOTH THE LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION AND THE LEVEL OF EXCELLENCE IN OUR SCHOOLS.

SO IN 1985...WE PASSED A PROGRAM THAT MADE MINNESOTA THE FIRST STATE WHERE JUNIORS AND SENIORS COULD TAKE POST-SECONDARY COURSES AT STATE EXPENSE...EVEN IF THEY WERE NOT AMONG THE TOP STUDENTS IN THEIR CLASS.

THE STUDENTS ARE ELIGIBLE TO EARN HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE CREDITS SIMULTANEOUSLY... AND STATE EDUCATION AIDS FOLLOW THE STUDENTS TO WHEREVER THEY ATTEND SCHOOL.

THE PROGRAM WAS AN IMMEDIATE SUCCESS... WITH 95 PERCENT OF THE FIRST GROUP OF PARTICIPANTS SAYING THEY WERE SATISFIED.

SIX PERCENT OF THOSE PARTICIPANTS WERE HIGH SCHOOL DROP-OUTS WHO CAME BACK TO SCHOOL.

RIGHT NOW MORE THAN 54-HUNDRED JUNIORS AND SENIORS ARE PARTICIPATING IN THE PROGRAM.

OVERALL THEY ARE DOING AS WELL OR BETTER AT THE POST-SECONDARY LEVEL THAN MEMBERS OF THE FRESHMAN CLASS.

SOME OF THESE STUDENTS ARE THE FIRST IN THEIR FAMILY EVER TO ATTEND COLLEGE.

FOR THEM IT IS A DREAM COME TRUE...AND A SOURCE OF GREAT PRIDE.

(GOVERNOR: HERE YOU COULD TELL THE STORY OF STACY CONDON.)

THERE ARE MANY STUDENTS LIKE STACY CONDON WHO HAVE BENEFITTED FROM THIS PROGRAM.

BUT THE MOST ENCOURAGING RESPONSE HAS COME FROM THE HIGH SCHOOLS.

SO THEY DON'T LOSE STUDENTS AND FUNDING TO THE COLLEGES...THE PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS HAVE QUADRUPLED THEIR NUMBER OF ADVANCED PLACEMENT COURSES OVER A TWO-YEAR PERIOD... AND DOUBLED THE NUMBER OF WORLD LANGUAGE COURSES OVER THE PAST FOUR YEARS.

THEY HAVE ALSO DEVELOPED PARTNERSHIPS WITH POST-SECONDARY SCHOOLS...SO THAT YOU HAVE COMMUNITY COLLEGES OFFERING COURSES RIGHT IN THE HIGH SCHOOL.

PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN PUBLIC HIGH SCHOLS AND THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA HAVE GONE FROM ZERO IN 1985 TO 24 IN 1989.

THE POINT IS...BY EXPANDING CHOICES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS...WE HAVE IMPROVED THE OVERALL QUALITY OF THE SYSTEM...SO THAT STUDENTS BENEFIT REGARDLESS OF WHETHER OR NOT THEY EXERCISE THEIR CHOICE OPTIONS.

THIS PROGRAM IS A REAL WINNER AND IS NO LONGER CONTROVERSIAL.

I WANT TO EMPHASIZE THAT IT IS VITAL FOR THESE ALTERNATIVES TO EXIST AS MUCH FOR STUDENTS WHO ARE STRUGGLING AS FOR STUDENTS WHO ARE SUCCESSFUL.

THAT IS THE GUIDING PHILOSOPHY BEHIND OUR SECOND CHOICE REFORM...PASSED IN 1987.

IT ENABLES DROP-OUTS AND STUDENTS WHO ARE AT RISK OF DROPPING OUT TO CHOOSE AMONG A VARIETY OF ALTERNATIVES...INCLUDING AREA LEARNING CENTERS...COLLEGE COURSES...AND CLASSES IN OTHER SCHOOL DISTRICTS.

WITHIN THE FIRST SIX MONTHS WE OFFERED THIS PROGRAM...15-HUNDRED STUDENTS SIGNED UP FOR IT...AND HALF OF THEM WERE DROP-OUTS COMING BACK TO EARN THEIR DIPLOMA.

WE BEGAN TO ADVERTISE THE PROGRAM IN THE MEDIA AND ON GROCERY BAGS IN THE STORES.

OUR SLOGAN WAS THAT STUDENTS ON THE VERGE OF DROPPING OUT DON'T NEED A LECTURE...THEY NEED AN ALTERNATIVE.

WHEN WE INSTALLED AN EDUCATION HOTLINE LAST FALL...WE RECEIVED 13-HUNDRED CALLS INQUIRING ABOUT THE PROGRAM WITHIN THE FIRST WEEK.

THIS PROVES WE CAN RE-INTEREST STUDENTS WHO HAVE LOST TOUCH WITH LEARNING...AND WE CAN REVITALIZE OUR SCHOOLS.

LAST YEAR...WE BROADENED THIS GRADUATION INCENTIVES PROGRAM TO INCLUDE ADULT DROP-OUTS OVER AGE 21.

A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA IS NOW AN ENTITLEMENT IN MINNESOTA.

ALREADY WE HAVE 1800 ADULT DROP-OUTS PARTICIPATING IN THE PROGRAM...ALONG WITH 1800 STUDENTS BETWEEN THE AGES OF 12 AND 21 WHO ARE PARTICIPATING.

THAT'S 36-HUNDRED STUDENTS--MOST OF THEM FORMER DROP-OUTS--WHO HAVE USED CHOICE TO STAY IN SCHOOL AND PROVIDE THEMSELVES WITH A CHANCE AT A BETTER JOB FOR THEMSELVES AND THEIR FAMILIES.

THE THIRD AND PROBABLY THE MOST CONTROVERSIAL CHOICE REFORM IS OPEN ENROLLMENT...THE SIMPLE BUT PROFOUND IDEA THAT STUDENTS WITH HELP FROM THEIR PARENTS CAN DECIDE WHAT TYPE OF CURRICULUM BEST FITS THEIR NEEDS.

(GOVERNOR: HERE YOU CAN TALK ABOUT IDENTIFYING THE BEST 180 SCHOOLS AND ASKING THEM "WHAT ARE YOU AFRAID OF?")

WE PASSED A VOLUNTARY OPEN ENROLLMENT BILL IN 1987.

AGAIN...STATE REVENUES FOLLOW THE STUDENTS TO WHEREVER THEY ATTEND SCHOOL.

AFTER TWO YEARS---WITH WELL OVER HALF THE PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS ELIGIBLE TO MOVE TO ANOTHER DISTRICT IF THEY CHOOSE--THE PROGRAM HAS BEEN OPERATING WELL.

AS WE EXPECTED...IT TAKES A COMPELLING REASON FOR STUDENTS TO LEAVE THEIR FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS FOR ANOTHER DISTRICT...AND FEW HAVE DONE SO.

THERE HAVE BEEN NO MASS MIGRATIONS OR BUREAUCRATIC NIGHTMARES.

THERE IS NO SIGNIFICANT MOVEMENT TOWARD LARGER OR SMALLER DISTRICTS...AND ONLY A SLIGHT TREND TOWARD MORE WEALTHY DISTRICTS.

SINCE OUR GOAL IS NOT TO GET STUDENTS TO MOVE...BUT TO HELP DISTRICTS IMPROVE...THIS IS A POSITIVE SIGN.

AS WE HOPED...THE PRIMARY IMPACT OF OPEN ENROLLMENT HAS NOT BEEN <u>BETWEEN</u> SCHOOL DISTRICTS...IT HAS BEEN <u>WITHIN</u> SCHOOL DISTRICTS.

THEY HAVE RESPONDED WITH GREATER FLEXIBILITY AND INNOVATION TO ACCOMODATE THE INDIVIDUAL NEEDS OF STUDENTS.

AT THE SAME TIME...WHAT MOVEMENT DOES EXIST ADDS TO THE CULTURAL DIVERSITY OF OUR SCHOOLS...AND EXPOSES STUDENTS TO PEERS FROM DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS.

IF WE RECOGNIZE THAT EDUCATION IS AS MUCH ABOUT SOCIAL INTERACTION AND ADAPTABILITY AS IT IS ABOUT TEST-TUBES AND TEXTBOOKS...WE KNOW THAT THIS EXPOSURE BETTER PREPARES OUR STUDENTS TO BE MORE PRODUCTIVE CITIZENS... AND MORE PRODUCTIVE WORKERS IN TODAY'S GLOBAL ECONOMY.

THAT IS WHY I FIRMLY BELIEVE THAT OPEN ENROLLMENT CANNOT INTERFERE WITH EXISTING DESEGREGATION PROGRAMS...WHY IT SHOULD BE PRIMARILY RESTRICTED TO THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS ...AND WHY TRANSPORTATION ASSISTANCE SHOULD BE PROVIDED TO LOW-INCOME STUDENTS WISHING TO TRANSFER TO ANOTHER SCHOOL DISTRICT.

ALL OF THESE COMPONENTS ARE INVOLVED IN THE MINNESOTA OPEN ENROLLMENT PLAN.

IN MINNESOTA...PUBLIC RESPONSE TO CHOICE HAS BEEN POSITIVE.

THE PERCENTAGE OF SCHOOL BOARD REFERENDUMS THAT ARE PASSING IS ON THE RISE...AND THOUSANDS OF STUDENTS ARE TRANSFERRING FROM NON-PUBLIC SCHOOLS BACK INTO OUR PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM.

BECAUSE OF THAT SUPPORT...I AM PROUD TO SAY THAT IN 1988 MINNESOTA BECAME THE FIRST STATE TO ENACT A COMPREHENSIVE OPEN ENROLLMENT POLICY.

BY 1990...ALL OF OUR PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS WILL BE ELIGIBLE TO MOVE... PROVIDED IT DOES NOT INTERFERE WITH DESEGREGATION.

OVER TIME...TEACHERS HAVE ALSO BECOME MORE SUPPORTIVE OF CHOICE.

AS THE SCHOOLS BECOME MORE RESPONSIVE... THEY SEE THEIR ROLE BECOME MORE ACTIVE.

A RECENT CARNEGIE FOUNDATION STUDY SHOWED THAT MINNESOTA TEACHERS WERE MORE LIKELY TO SAY THEY ARE TAKING A BIGGER ROLE IN SHPAING THE CURRICULUM AND GOALS OF THE SCHOOL THAN TEACHERS IN OTHER STATES.

BUT MOST OF ALL...OUR CHOICE AND ACCESS TO EXCELLENCE REFORMS ARE FOR THE STUDENTS.

OUR OFFICE AND THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION HAVE BOTH RECEIVED MANY LETTERS FROM PARENTS AND STUDENTS...THANKING US FOR PROVIDING THEM WITH CHOICE.

ONE STUDENT WROTE..."I STAY IN SCHOOL NOW INSTEAD OF SKIPPING BECAUSE THE ENVIRONMENT IS RELAXED. THE TEACHERS ARE LIKE MY FRIENDS. I'VE GOTTEN INVOLVED WITH STUDENT GOVERNMENT AND HAVE BEEN TRAINED TO DO VIDEO TAPING ON THE CABLE CHANNEL."

ANOTHER STUDENT SAID..."I'M DOING BETTER AT HOME BECAUSE I FEEL BETTER ABOUT MYSELF. I'M REALIZING FOR THE FIRST TIME WHAT SUCCESS IS ALL ABOUT. I KNOW NOW THAT I'M NOT STUPID...THAT I CAN DO A LOT OF THINGS."

THESE ARE JUST TWO OF THE HUNDREDS OF SUCCESS STORIES THAT ARE TAKING PLACE IN OUR SCHOOLS BECAUSE OF CHOICE PROGRAMS.

WE ARE PROUD OF WHAT WE HAVE DONE IN MINNESOTA.

AT THE SAME TIME...WE RECOGNIZE THAT WHAT WORKS IN MINNESOTA WILL NOT AUTOMATICALLY WORK IN EVERY OTHER STATE.

AS THE 1988-89 CHAIR OF THE EDUCATION COMMISSION OF THE STATES...I HAVE PROMOTED CHOICE AS A GENERAL PHILOSOPHY...WITHOUT SUGGESTING ANY RIGID MODELS.

WE HAVE TRIED TO MAKE E-C-S A CLEARINGHOUSE FOR CHOICE OPTIONS...SO THAT STATES AND INDIVIDUAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS HAVE A WEALTH OF INFORMATION TO HELP THEM DESIGN THEIR OWN PROGRAMS.

AS E-C-S CHAIR...I HAVE ASKED EVERY STATE TO EXAMINE ITS EDUCATION SYSTEM TO DETERMINE HOW TO ENCOURAGE MORE INVOLVEMENT AND CHOICES AMONG PARENTS AND STUDENTS.

BEHIND THAT REQUEST IS MY BELIEF THAT EDUCATION REFORMS MUST BE ACCOMPLISHED AT THE STATE AND LOCAL LEVEL.

CHOICE NEEDS TO BE DEBATED...EXAMINED AND MADE TO FIT THE INDIVIDUAL NEEDS OF EACH STATE.

AS A FORMER SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER...I KNOW THAT IT WON'T SOLVE ALL THE PROBLEMS OF EDUCATION BY ITSELF...AND THAT IT SHOULD NOT BE USED AS A SUBSTITUTE FOR ADEQUATE EDUCATION FUNDING.

SINCE I BECAME GOVERNOR IN 1983...FUNDING FOR EDUCATION IN MINNESOTA HAS RISEN AT TWICE THE RATE OF INFLATION...AND THREE TIMES FASTER THAN THE STATE BUDGET AS A WHOLE.

THE PERCENTAGE OF K-12 FUNDING IN THE TOTAL BUDGET HAS RISEN FROM 21 PERCENT TO MORE THAN 25 PERCENT IN THE PAST SIX YEARS.

OUR FUNDING FORMULA FOR EDUCATION REVENUES IS WEIGHTED SLIGHTLY TOWARD THE LARGE URBAN DISTRICTS...THROUGH WHAT IS KNOWN AS COMPENSATORY REVENUES FOR AT-RISK STUDENTS.

YET THERE ARE SOME SERIOUS PROBLEMS THAT REMAIN IN OUR INNER CITY SCHOOLS...PROBLEMS THAT I AM SURE MANY OF YOU ARE CONFRONTING IN YOUR DISTRICTS.

I HAVE VISITED SCHOOLS IN MINNEAPOLIS AND ST. PAUL WHERE SOME STUDENTS BEGINNING SCHOOL DO NOT KNOW THEIR LAST NAME...OR HOW TO COUNT TO TWO...SCHOOLS WHERE THE TURNOVER RATE THROUGH MOBILITY IS AS HIGH AS 85 PERCENT.

I HAVE TALKED WITH A WIDE SPECTRUM OF PEOPLE---INCLUDING PARENTS...EDUCATORS... LEGISLATORS AND BUSINESSPEOPLE---SEARCHING FOR THE BEST COMBINATION OF TOOLS TO IMPROVE STUDENT PERFORMANCE.

ACROSS MINNESOTA AND THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY...I HAVE HEARD OVERWHELMING EVIDENCE THAT A CRUCIAL FACTOR IN REDUCING DROP-OUT RATES AND IMPROVING STUDENT PERFORMANCE IS THROUGH QUALITY PROGRAMS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE...SUCH AS THE FEDERAL HEAD START PROGRAM.

DIFFERENT STUDIES INDICATE THAT FOR EVERY DOLLAR INVESTED IN QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION...THERE IS A SAVINGS OF ANYWHERE FROM FOUR TO EIGHT DOLLARS IN FUTURE SOCIAL SPENDING.

WE HAVE RESPONDED WITH A $55 MILLION DOLLAR BUDGETARY PROPOSAL CURRENTLY BEFORE THE LEGISLATURE...KNOWN AS THE CHILDREN'S AGENDA.

OUR CHILDREN'S AGENDA INCLUDES EXPANSION OF OUR EARLY CHILDHOOD FAMILY EDUCATION PROGRAM...EXPANDED PRE-SCHOOL HEALTH SCREENING...AN ADDITIONAL 16 MILLION DOLLARS IN STATE APPROPRIATIONS FOR HEAD START...AND 22 MILLION DOLLARS TO DEVELOP AND EXPAND CHILDCARE SERVICES BOTH INSIDE AND OUTSIDE OF OUR SCHOOLS.

WE HAVE ALSO HEARD---PARTICULARLY FROM TEACHERS AND URBAN SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS SUCH AS YOURSELVES---THAT SOCIAL FACTORS SUCH AS DRUGS...CRIME AND THE DISINTEGRATION OF THE FAMILY HAVE A MAJOR IMPACT ON HOW WELL A STUDENT LEARNS.

NOWHERE ARE THESE PROBLEMS MORE PREVALENT THAN IN OUR MAJOR CITIES.

WE HAVE RESPONDED WITH A BUDGETARY PROPOSAL KNOWN AS YEAR OF THE CITY THAT IS CURRENTLY BEFORE THE MINNESOTA LEGISLATURE.

YEAR OF THE CITY WOULD TARGET 70 MILLION DOLLARS FOR CENTER CITY SCHOOLS IN MINNEAPOLIS...ST. PAUL AND DULUTH...AS WELL AS BETTER LOW-INCOME AND TRANSITIONAL HOUSING AND ENHANCED SOCIAL SERVICES FOR FAMILIES IN THESE CITIES.

FROM THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY...WE HAVE HEARD THAT OUR SCHOOLS ARE IN A POSITION SIMILAR TO AMERICAN BUSINESS 10 OR 15 YEARS AGO---LOSING THE GLOBAL COMPETITION BECAUSE OF A LACK OF TECHNOLOGY.

(GOVERNOR: YOU MIGHT WANT TO BRIEFLY MENTION THE BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP AT ECS AND YOUR CO-CHAIR, JACK MCALLISTER OF US WEST.)

TO UPGRADE OUR TECHNOLOGY...WE HAVE RESPONSED WITH A BUDGET PROPOSAL TO INVEST UP TO 80 MILLION DOLLARS FOR THE PURCHASE OF STUDENT COMPUTERS AND OTHER EDUCATION TECHNOLOGY.

THIS WOULD ENHANCE OUR EXISTING RESOURCES...WHICH AS OF 1987 INCLUDED MORE PERSONAL COMPUTERS PER PUBLIC SCHOOL BUILDING THAN ANY STATE IN THE NATION.

IF WE ARE SERIOUS ABOUT THE THEME OF THIS SESSION...WHICH IS "EXCELLENCE FOR ALL---SAVING AMERICA'S SCHOOLS"...WE MUST WORK TOGETHER AND RESPOND IN PARTNERSHIP ON ALL FRONTS THAT ARE OBSTACLES TO EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE.

WE MUST PROVIDE AN ADEQUATE LEVEL OF EDUCATION FUNDING TO ENABLE YOU TO IMPLEMENT THE RULES AND MANDATES THAT HAVE BEEN ESTABLISHED.

WE MUST INVEST EARLY IN OUR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION...AS EARLY AS PRE-NATAL CARE AND EARLY CHILDHOOD FAMILY EDUCATION.

WE MUST RECOGNIZE THE SPECIAL PROBLEMS AND DISADVANTAGES THAT INTERFERE WITH EDUCATION IN OUR MAJOR CITY SCHOOLS.

AND WE MUST PROVIDE CHOICES FOR PARENTS AND STUDENTS IN OUR EDUCATION SYSTEM.

THESE CHOICES ARE PERHAPS THE MOST IMPORTANT PARTNERSHIP TOOLS WE HAVE.

CHOICE IS VITAL BECAUSE PARENTS SHARE A DESIRE TO HELP PROVIDE THEIR CHILDREN WITH THE BEST POSSIBLE EDUCATION...

AND CHILDREN SHARE A DESIRE TO DISTINGUISH THEMSELVES AS INDIVIDUALS WORTHY OF RESPECT.

CHOICE PROVIDES BOTH PARENTS AND CHILDREN WITH THE OPPORTUNITY AND THE RESPONSIBILITY TO LIVE UP TO THOSE DREAMS AND DESIRES.

FOR THE SAKE OF THOSE PARENTS AND CHILDREN---AND FOR THE SAKE OF EDUCATION--- WE MUST GRANT THEM THE POWER TO HELP DIRECT THEIR OWN LIVES.

THANK YOU.